

NRO REVIEW COMPLETED

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2 January 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT : Meeting in the Office of Mr. U. Alexis Johnson, Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Department of State, 29 December

REFERENCE : Resolution Passed by the United Nations General Assembly 20 December 1961 Regarding Registration of Satellite Launchings (Sponsored by U. S. Delegation)

1. Mr. Eugene Kiefer, Special Assistant for Technical Analysis, Development Projects Division, and the undersigned met at 1400 hours 29 December in the office of the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs at his request with Mr. Philip Farley, Special Assistant to the Secretary of State for Atomic Energy and Space, and Dr. Joseph Charyk, Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Research and Development, to discuss actions stemming from the referenced resolution, a copy of which in draft, dated 11 December 1961, was available to us. The background of the resolution as brought out at the meeting indicates that the idea germinated in the International Organizations Division, Department of State, presumably as a tactic to at a minimum require the Russians to register basic information regarding their satellite launchings. State coordinated the idea with the Office of International Security Affairs, Department of Defense, at an unspecified time, but further coordination within the DOD, particularly in the Air Force, appears not to have taken place between ISA and the military. The Department also coordinated with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and having received no negative inputs from any of the aforementioned, the resolution was surfaced as Agenda Item 21 of the Sixteenth Session, United Nations General Assembly, First Committee, "Report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space". Passage occurred in December shortly before Christmas.

2. The concern now felt by the Department and the Air Force and, of course, CIA revolves around the primary problem of compliance with the full language of the resolution.

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"Calls upon States launching objects into orbit or beyond to furnish information promptly to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space through the Secretary-General for purposes of registration of launchings;

"Requests the Secretary-General to maintain a public registry of the information furnished in accordance with paragraph 1 above."

In the quotation above the critical words are underlined to illustrate the problem faced by the several Agencies. Until recently DOD policy has been to publicly announce launching of satellites under their control by means of press handouts distributed just prior to the firing, or in some cases immediately after orbit is achieved. Within recent weeks in the case of SAMOS and MIDAS, this policy has been restricted to a simple announcement of the launch. NASA has consistently followed a policy of fairly full press release data, including the vital statistics of mission, payload, and configuration openly available to the press. In addition, the Goddard Space Flight Center has published a Satellite Situation Report periodical, as well as a Space Activities Summary. Both of these documents cover not only objects launched by or controlled by NASA, but in reality constitute an inventory of all objects remaining in orbit on a given date, both U. S. and foreign. In addition, the Space Control Center of NORAD in Colorado Springs maintains an active inventory of all orbital vehicles, casings, etc.

3. It was evident during the discussion that United States' concern over the implications under the U. N. resolution are manifold, including the following:

a. It has been United States practice to give mission-oriented code names to various military and scientific satellites; i.e., EXPLORER, DISCOVERER, SAMOS, MIDAS, and the like. Given the present DOD desire to avoid press publicity on vehicle launchings where the mission is some form of reconnaissance, it is Dr. Charyk's view, with which no one dissented, that in any compliance with the U. N. resolution, there must be a break with the tradition of the past having to do with the use of mission-oriented code names. Three possibilities were suggested.

(1) Adoption of the Smithsonian Astrophysical Laboratory system which utilizes one or more Greek letters, plus a number designating the items of hardware in orbit.

(2) Use of an indicator simply giving the power plant designator with a sequential numbering system following; i.e., "ATLAS-THOR Booster No. 161."

(3) Adoption of some internationally acceptable form of satellite identification, again non-mission-oriented, but simply categorized; i.e., "U. S. Earth Satellite No. 3", or "U. S. Lunar Probe No. 1", etc.

b. The amount of data required under the language of the U. N. resolution is at the moment a grey area. If it is assumed that the purpose of the launching must be covered, then some fairly non-informational, generalized statement of purpose must be prepared for each launch. Consideration of this matter has fallen to Dr. Charyk, who will be the recipient of an identical letter being sent to DOD and NASA from Mr. Johnson, formally requesting reaction to the U. N. resolution.

c. Because of the potential importance of single-orbit reconnaissance satellite launchings in the future, it was informally agreed that these should not be included within any information reported to the U. N. Secretariat in conformity with the resolution. Precedent in eliminating this group of launchings would be said to lie with the original Russian orbital flight of Major Gagarin which lasted only 180 minutes. This assumption is, of course, based upon the premise that the ultimate purpose of the resolution is to provide an inventory to guarantee that outer space is used only for peaceful purposes and that no continued threat lies in orbiting hardware. This does not take into account any problems presented by downstream development of bombardment platforms in space.

d. Since it was assumed that the Russians would do everything in their power to minimize the spread of any vital information about their own launchings, it was fairly well agreed that certainly at the start any U. S. response should say little more than absolutely necessary. Consequently, it was informally concluded that there would be no release of telemetry frequencies or specific payload data. The question of the reporting of an actual orbital period was discussed but left open. Discussion revolved around the time at which an orbit could be considered fixed, as in the case of any satellite discharging a recoverable payload where the subsequent orbit of the residual casing was different than the original orbit achieved.

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4. The contents of current NASA press releases on satellite launchings came under discussion in view of their relative completeness and accuracy, and it was generally concluded that in the future, DOD programs would have to be excluded from such releases, but that nothing done by the DOD in this respect would limit NASA in those instances (such as the MERCURY program) where it is wholly desirable that full data be released in a manner consistent with past practice. In these cases such information would be considered supplemental to the basic common denominator reporting system which would apply under the U. N. resolution to all U. S. satellite launchings.

5. No time was established for communications from the Department to the U. S. Ambassador to the U. N. on this subject, although Mr. Johnson felt at the end of the meeting that he was in a position to finalize the draft of his letter to DOD and NASA on the subject which would solicit a position from these Agencies. Mr. Johnson suggested that consideration be given to a fairly complete briefing on U. S. reconnaissance satellites to Ambassador Adlai Stevenson and his associate, Mr. Harlan Cleveland. Mr. Johnson and Dr. Charyk, together with Mr. Farley, agreed that it would be timely to give a similar briefing to Edward Welch, Secretary of the National Space Council under the Vice President. I told Mr. Johnson that the Vice President had been briefed on satellite programs under the purview of CIA, and then he asked me to take steps to have Mr. Welch brought in on these same programs once formal concurrence had been obtained from the Vice President himself.

6. The meeting concluded without a determination to meet again on the subject in the same air of surprise in which it began. This atmosphere is best summed up by Mr. Johnson's closing remark, "It just goes to show what can slide between the stools when you are not looking."

JAMES A. CUNNINGHAM, JR.
Assistant Chief
DPD-DD/P

Attachment
U. N. Resolution

CC: DDCI
DD/P

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